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THE PROBLEM OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLICS

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It often helps the processes of thought to take up a difficult question in a fresh light, to face the familiar situation as if you had never meet it before. I wish to try this method in regard to the problem of the relations of the United States with the nations south of us. Let us clear our minds, at least for the time, of sundry prejudices which doubtless possess us, of certain inherited notions about South America, of other peoples' ideas about the situation which have filtered into our brains through the newspapers, without ever being questioned or digested. Let us even dare to take down from its pedestal our grand inherited fetish, the Monroe Doctrine, and dust it off and examine it as we would treat any other ordinary piece of old furniture. Let us disabuse our minds of the idea that because Chili and Peru are on the same continent with ourselves they are somehow nearer to us than Austria or Italy; or again, because they are called republics, that they are more democratic than England or Sweden.

This effort will involve a new consideration of the subject of Preparedness. We shall discover that Preparedness is an almost unintelligible proposition, unless we know what policy we intend to follow in regard to Latin America. There are those who think that the United States ought at least to control all the states south of us. There are those who hold that we must establish a continental league of defense with those states. There is a grim chance of our lazily drifting into some relationship with them, which we shall have never fairly discussed or voted upon, but which, once established, would place upon our shoulders unknown burdens, responsibilities and possible world quarrels. We

have thus already annexed the custom houses of Santo Domingo and Hayti. We hold Cuba and Panama and Nicaragua by a string. Every enterprise of this sort constitutes a new liability for ships and fighting men. Behind every mention of the duty of Preparedness looms the shadow of the Monroe Doctrine, innocent enough, it may be, if we know what we mean by it, but actually sinister if we let it impose upon us as a sort of superstition or mystery, beyond question or discussion.

We need now to ask ourselves frankly what a republic is, or rather what it is in the new democratic sense in which our fathers established the United States. As a scheme or theory of government we hardly realize how deep the line of cleavage is, which separates our system of government from the governments which have mostly prevailed in the world. We do not stop to consider how wonderful an advance our kind of government is. Indeed, the word government, which implies a class above ruling the people beneath, hardly fits the new idea. Democratic government is essentially cooperative; it constitutes or ought to constitute a commonwealth. Its officials, so far from being a class, are properly the servants of the people. In the old world, the governmental group always tended to be an aristocracy, always more or less selfish. The aim of a democracy on the contrary is the utmost welfare of the people. Its chief and proper business is always at home. The hereditary aim of the old kind of government is to do things abroad. It is busy in watching other rival governments; it is always thinking about possible war. Its great outlay, even under the name of "defense," goes for the support of its war establishment. It conceives of new territories and colonies as its appropriate field of enterprise. It works for the interests of a small class of rich men or adventurers. Its governmental people always magnify their office; they want bigness, big revenues and taxes, a big army and navy, a big supply of offices and salaries with which to provide their henchmen.

Unfortunately, we in the United States have inherited or

absorbed many of the traditions of Empire. Within the last twenty-five years our governmental people have taken on more and more the ideas and superstitions of the imperial nations. The bigger we have grown, the more have our political leaders set their eyes on playing the same rôle in the world that England, Germany and other nations have played. The great war grew out of the inevitable friction and rivalries of this imperial game. It is not a war of peoples, but of governmental groups, all of them more alike than they are different. The peril of the United States is not on the side of a people who desire war; our peril is that our government has come to imagine its chief duty to lie, as in the case of the old world powers, in enterprises abroad rather than in promoting the welfare of its own people at home. How many of our leaders or congressmen really put this idea first of all?

The Spanish and Philippine wars enormously promoted this undemocratic view about the nature of our government. Every new battleship added to the urgency of the special interests which desired a greater navy and the extension of imperialistic enterprise. The upshot of the subtle change and development from the proper democratic idea of our national business backward toward the bellicose and imperialistic old-world idea is that the United States presents the astounding spectacle of the most gigantic, wasteful and extravagant expenditures for armaments known to history in a time of peace. Except for the Post Office Department, almost self sustaining, our National Treasury mostly exists in order to collect money for the Army and Navy! If this is not militarism, what is it?

The idea of democracy is not only the welfare of the people. It rests back upon a new and spiritual thought of the nature of man. Man is no longer the proper food for cannon, or the slave of a superior class. A religion behind all the names of religion binds men everywhere together. In fact there is no philosophical ground for democracy, apart from the scheme of mere domination by might, which does not rest upon the bed-rock of this deeper religion. We must

make our choice between essential religion and the pure paganism that "might is right." We organize ourselves into a Commonwealth in the spirit of mutual respect, with faith in the common humanity which men of all races share. We may not do to one another what the others should not do to us. In short, the fundamental rule is mutual good will. However selfish people may think otherwise, there is no mightier working rule of life than this. Grant that we have not yet worked out our democratic principles to their fulfillment. They are in our minds; we all at our best own to their inevitable constraint. We desert them always at our peril. We forever return to them for inspiration and guidance. They are undoubtedly closer to the hearts of the great masses of the people than the more sophisticated and the governmental classes imagine.

This democratic idea of the common humanity wonderfully alters the relations which our nation bears towards the other nations. It modifies the thought and the duties of patriotism. No one can respect his fellow citizen in Alabama or New Mexico or the newcomer from Italy or Syria, and cease from his humane respect at the boundary line of the United States. No one can desire the welfare of the people on the Pacific Coast and not also the welfare of the people across the ocean. Mr. Wilson has well said that the basis of all international relations must be our humanity. Mr. Roosevelt, when in Christiania, eloquently proclaimed the Golden Rule as the law of the nations. Even Saul occasionally chances to get among the prophets!

There are those among us (who ought to know better) who hold the old-world rule of the strong, of the master, the tyrant, the aristocrat, that authority, discipline and government rest back at last upon force. Hence we must have the whipping post, the chain gang, the prison, and the army. Hence we must even have a League to Enforce Peace, that is, war to stop war! Men have tried this doctrine for thousands of years, have drenched the earth with blood, and never thus got beyond some form of tyranny. But no man, no group of men, and no nation has ever yet

patiently acted out of humanity without evoking the same, without breaking down opposition, without winning victory for the advancement of all men. Even our modern penology, involving the use of the police power of the state, is already settling down to these grounds. The policeman, the sheriff and the warden must be the friends of the unfortunate men under their care.

It is not therefore mere theory, or a blind idealism, but the plainest common-sense, when we say that a democracy has nothing to do with the old-world and brutal business of war. We cannot state this truth in too radical form. We cannot engage in war without having enemies; but we have no enemies, neither can we treat any people as enemies. The humanity at the heart of our own national organization forbids us to fight. As a humane people, we are bound to be patient and considerate; we are bound to depend upon the use of our commonsense and we stand ready to bring all claims to the umpire. Neither do we need any defense except our good will. We desire not so much that another shall yield to our will as that he shall give a willing consent. War means the compulsion of the will; it means the continuance of ill will. Even the preparation for war or, what Mr. Roosevelt calls "the big stick," is the symbol of fear, or suspicion, or an implied threat in any case, a wound dealt to the common humanity, in every case the arrogant gesture of the "superior person" toward an inferior. The democracy has no business and no need to make this ugly gesture.

The war-power which we carelessly place in the hands of our President is a striking demonstration of the anomaly of a democracy marching to war. In every other respect the President is a servant of the people. For most purposes it would be innocent and possibly wise to give the Executive large discretionary power and initiative. But in view of war he suddenly becomes the Imperator. In every other business he must do nothing without the people or their Congress. But, as we lately saw in the Vera Cruz incident, the President may involve the nation overnight in

an act of war. This is to defeat the fundamental idea of government of the people, for the people, and by the people.

Again, the republic exists to permit the freest development of the thought of its people. We cannot grow in wisdom without differences of opinion and the free utterance of our differences. But when the President approaches the anomalous quagmire of war he has the face to expect the whole nation to suppress the truth of their actual differences and to support whatever he may do, even to his mistakes! Choose a tyranny, if you wish a like-minded or united nation, necessitated to conform to a single mode of opinion! And war is tyranny, as we see now in England, compelling men into line whose union is false. Besides, when war comes, always the result of the imperialistic activities, or the blindness of the few, there looms in the distance the utter anomaly of conscription. The unwilling citizen of a democracy, a believer in the absolute sway of the Golden Rule as we believe in the law of gravitation, must be forced to go out to lie and deceive and rob and kill men—no more blameworthy than his own comrades—over a quarrel in which he may hold that the President and his faction are altogether in the wrong! Where might is right, where the old world empire stands, this awful injustice stands with it; what place has it in a modern republic?

Moreover, the strain on the character of most governmental people by their elevation into the high chairs of office is great enough when their power is limited to the political and social spheres. As soon as we add military power, when we put the sword into their hands, we make the psychological strain on the human nature too excessive. Men cannot hold such power, as a rule, without desiring to use it. We have a conspicuous instance of this fact, in the case of the really admirable man, who, having once fallen in love with the "big stick," can never talk gently again.

We may now see what the only true policy for the American Republics is, and especially our own policy towards all nations. If the democracy has no legitimate use for war, and indeed can do every just thing more effectively by

its own proper peaceable means than by war, we must evidently wish, first, in every way to avoid and reduce the area of possible irritation and friction with other nations. The Monroe Doctrine obviously creates the most mischievous opportunity for such friction. Of course the conditions have utterly changed from the time of its enunciation. It never had valid standing as international law. No one to-day knows what it is. But its indefiniteness offers a constant occasion for meddling, for misunderstanding, for the show of the teeth of an aggressive militarism, for the reiterated publications of "scare headlines" in the newspapers, for fresh demands for battleships. The Monroe Doctrine is not even acceptable to the Latin American states, but rather a menace to their independence. They know that for a jingo and capitalistic group of our people it translates into a huge scheme for future exploitation and paramountcy. It means "All America for the United States." As for the European Powers, the Monroe Doctrine has come to be the vague expression of American jealousy and fear, growing towards a most unseemly habit of talking and thinking of eventual war. Who will not agree that the Monroe Doctrine is the one and almost the only cloud on the horizon portending quarrel, for instance, with Germany? What business indeed has a democratic nation, organized for the welfare of the people to stand ready, like a dog with a bone, to fight over trade and land disputes down in South America? Why not then renounce once for all this vast, hazy area of needless friction.

This means the reversal of a very dangerous policy of recent years, namely, the effort to acquire territory, or the control of territory, in the West Indies and to the South. These countries are inhabited by more or less backward populations, largely of the Negro or Indian races. We are not treating the people of these races decently or respectfully within our own borders. It is sheer hypocrisy to profess that we are acquiring Hayti or the Danish Islands out of an unselfish regard to humanity!

Is it said, however, that we are thus avoiding the likeli-

hood of European powers coming over to collect debts or to suppress insurrections? We reply that it is none of the business of a democracy to entangle itself with the quarrels or grievances of other nations, in America or elsewhere, save only as we may be able to serve as friends to *all* of them. Who made us a judge or divider over them? Why, we repeat, must the United States be prepared to fight the most powerful states of the world over such a question as the boundary of wild lands in Venezuela, or the emigration of a surplus population of excellent German folks to distant Brazil?

This brings us to the formulation of certain simple principles upon which all Republics ought to agree, and to convert as soon as possible all the other nations to their opinion. First, let us establish the doctrine that our nationals should travel or visit or trade abroad, and especially in countries with unsettled political conditions, at their own risk. How preposterous that we must hold the flag over travelers, merchants, or missionaries who penetrate into the interior of China, or Africa or South America! That we must on occasion send a punitive expedition to exact penalties for such injuries as may come to these venturesome nationals! This incendiary and imperialistic idea has nothing to do with democratic patriotism. It is a case of imperialistic pride of power. It extends the area of friction over the whole earth. In fact no small nation, like Holland or Norway, could contemplate such a proposition. Yet in a vague way, never fairly discussed, the new Preparedness faces towards this absurdly colossal enterprise. Let us then frankly unmask this absurdity and henceforth bid our nationals who go abroad to travel on their own good behavior, and if they choose to go to backward countries, to prepare, as the best missionaries always do, to adapt themselves to such conditions as the people live under whom they visit. Obviously they will serve humnity best by being compelled to be "on their good behavior." In the larger part of the world the conditions are as good as they average at home in respect to the safety of life and property.

Let us establish a similar principle for the use of the seas. So far as the seas are dangerous, it is no longer by reason of pirates. A slight international constabulary, with never a battleship, will keep the seas clear of this risk till such time as civilization has got its roots fairly established even in Oceanica or Borneo. Not piratical tribes, but the "Civilized" Powers, including the United States and every nation which builds fighting ships, are responsible for such dangers of the sea as have proved so disastrous and irritating in the present war. We have actually been willing to contemplate entering upon the war and making the seas still more dangerous to neutrals. Why do we not follow our common sense and our religion and throw our immense influence and our example in favor of neutralizing the ocean? Every people in the world would be safe if no fighting ships could be placed on the ocean.

Again, let us help to set a new rule in the case of our nationals who make permanent residence in another country like Mexico. We have encouraged such colonists to obtain concessions and to carry on industries, while holding our citizenship and looking to our Government for protection. Should we be pleased to have such colonization as this in the United States? Would it be well either for the natives or for the alien people? Let us do the humane thing, namely, facilitate the adoption by our nationals of the citizenship of the country of their residence; let them make themselves at home in the country, identify their interests with the welfare of its people and help establish everywhere more excellent government. What good might have come to the Republic of Mexico if it had already absorbed into its citizenship thousands of loyal and friendly Americans! Let us be ready of course to welcome these Americans back again into our own citizenship, if they return here for residence. There is no trouble or question about a divided allegiance touching any important subject, except alone upon the anomaly of war. Stop thinking of war and a man might be a good citizen of two or three nations at one and the same time and try honorably to serve each of them.

Let us also establish the principle that no nation should ever interfere in the government of another people for the enforcement of commercial claims or the collection of debts. Here as before, let those who venture their money take their own risks. Let them not expect their government, besides helping them to carry on trade at home, to transcend its proper limits and aid them in their frequently too dubious foreign ventures. What awful folly if the home government thus at last is made to appear as a sort of accomplice in extortionate bargains and is even driven to meddle with the affairs of the neighbor's government, and, as in the case of Hayti, to be found mixing with its factions and killing its people! Preparedness means just such use of our army and navy, with increasing need of force to override the reasonable opposition of alien people whom we have no real right to command. Let us rather use every means in our power to get rid of the area of such possible friction and jealousy.

Once more, let us announce to the world that, in conformity with the spirit of a friendly democracy we will never invade the territory of another people. Note what a singular defense between the United States and Canada has been set up by the joint agreement to maintain no fortifications or ships on our long border! Note, on the other hand, the constant irritation that must have lately stirred our Mexican neighbors by the presence of a large force of soldiers along our boundary line prepared any day to march into their country. How would we have liked such a situation? Would Villa ever have raided into Columbus if there had been no army to "dare him" to come over the line?

The Oriental problem resolves itself on the same lines that we have considered. Get rid of needless and unjustifiable irritation and the friction that causes it, as becomes a friendly republic. Stop pointing guns from Hawaii at Japan and excavating a costly harbor in which to keep our warships. This is nothing less than making faces at the Japanese. We are thus simply tempting or driving Japan

to put scowls on her face towards the United States and to burden her sorely overtaxed people to build more battleships. What does Japan wish more than that we shall "play fair" with her and treat her people as we expect to be treated when we go to Japan. Or, is our Preparedness meant, as Representative Gardner has intimated, to permit us to be insolent towards the people of the East and then to be exempt from the natural consequences of our insolence?

With obedience to the foregoing principles, so germane to our democratic idea, would go the cheerful agreement of each Republic with every other state in the world, to settle every matter of complaint or misunderstanding by recourse to the methods of the Hague Tribunal. No other method for the settlement of international questions is suitable to a democracy. Neither will there be many occasions to go to court, when once we shall have removed all the prolific opportunities for needless disagreement upon which we have commented. It is worthy of remark in passing that the Monroe Doctrine has always been one of the matters generally excepted from possible discussion by an international court, for the strange reason that it rests upon no principle of justice whatever, being the statement of an assumption, or what we call "bluff!" Leave the Monroe Doctrine aside then, and what questions are there that we cannot submit willingly to the decisions of a respectable court?

We have urged that a democracy has nothing to do with the preparations of war and that when once a democratic government is established, war becomes an anachronism. To put war power into the hands of its chiefs is at once to change the nature and trend of its operation from the normal effort to promote the welfare of its people to all sorts of dubious, perilous and meddlesome activities abroad. We have tried to show that the policy which befits our Republic consists, first of all things, in removing the needless occasions of irritation which it is the ill fate of imperial governments to create, but which a democracy is organized to avoid. Getting once rid of this area of friction, is there

anything left for which there is need that we should be ready to fight? Only a disordered imagination can discover anything! Name all the nations, and ask which of them is going to attack us, rob us, take away our liberties! What motive or interest has any nation for this? To fear their molestation is not to know the facts of human nature and how men everywhere tend, as we do ourselves, to respond to fair and friendly treatment. Our worst peril is at home, and specially from those sophisticated and imperialistic people who create a poisonous atmosphere of distrust and suspicion.

Remember that the world has progressed somewhat in the last nineteen hundred years. There are no Tamerlanes any more. The democratic leaven is at work everywhere, in Germany, in Russia, in Turkey, in China. The common people of the world are learning to read the Bibles of every religion. They are drawing closer in their sympathies. They do not uphold cruelty or oppression. They are ready to answer to the new call to get together, to act together, to treat each other as human. They may be roused by the show of force, mistrust, ill will and arrogance, but they are marvelously susceptible to the approach of justice and good temper. The United States does not need men at home or abroad who carry the big stick. They are dangerous wherever they live; for they make enemies. The United States wants men who think and act and speak in the terms of our common humanity.

But someone may still ask: Is there no need that we establish a league with the republics of the American continent? Why a league with them alone? Our interests and sympathies are not confined to a single continent. Why a league with people to the South, which leaves out our excellent friends in Canada? Why a league of any kind that leaves out England, or any one of the Fatherlands from whom our people have been recruited? Let us have all the leagues possible. The only point of danger lurks in the survival of the imperialistic idea that we must hold the league together by force and use it to threaten war against

a possible recalcitrant nation. If you have to compel nations to stay in the league, it ceases to be a league in which anyone would wish to stay. If all are willing to stay in the league you need no force. Let all the nations of the world come in, provided they go and come unarmed. But why propose that two or three nations, or a few of the nations should be armed to the teeth so as to be ready to threaten or punish some possible other nation? Or, why propose that they live in such perpetual distrust of each other as to be obliged to maintain a great central army and navy always prepared for war. The way to war is to think of war. The way to peace lies opposite; it is in mutual trust and good will. For the armed Power, like the armed man, is a psychologically different creature from the unarmed Power. There is no half way between the attitude of war and the attitude of humanity. A peaceful league of the American republics organized for trade or education would be fine and might be the beginning of the true commonwealth of nations. But a league in the name of fear and defense, all looking on the Powers of Europe with constant alarm, might easily be the worst menace to the peace of the world.

Let no one dream that we have set forth a negative program, as if the United States, shorn of its fighting machinery, would have no glory to win. Its true glory would now begin. We can only hint at the work that lies before the democracy, once bent on minding its own splendid business. What greater service can we render to the world than to work out success for our kind of government! We have only begun to do this. What grander effort of a friendly people for the peace of the world could we make than to throw away our armaments and go altogether out of the business of war, thus showing our faith in our humanity and our religion and our trust in the men of all races! What might we not be able to contribute out of our wealth and generosity toward the education of the peoples of this continent, planting schools and universities wherever they are needed. How enormous and even hu-

miliating are the unfinished tasks before us, the renewal of our half-baked cities, the proper care of our vast numbers of the ill-born and the imbecile, the guaranteeing decent opportunities to all the children of the poor, the assimilation of the new and still alien colonies from the ends of the earth, the giving of just citizenship to the millions of the negro race. How should frightened women go into hysteria over the imaginary perils of the invasion of American cities from abroad; how should our President be so grieved that Mexican peons are robbed of their lands; how should wise men wear themselves out insisting upon other peoples observance of the short-lived and ever changing laws of war, when there is humane work here at home for everyone who has a heart and conscience, to keep us so healthily busy that we could have no room for the sickly dreams of fear!